

**SAVE THE CHILDREN SWEDEN
SOUTHERN SUDAN PROGRAM**

**CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION
STUDY REPORT**

2006.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CRC	Convention of the Rights of the Child
CSG	Community Support Group
CM	Community Mobiliser
GOS	Government of Sudan
GOSS	Government of Southern Sudan
NGO	Non Government Organization
NBEG	Northern Bahr el Ghazal
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
PTA	Parent Teachers Association
SC-S	Save the Children Sweden
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SSIM/A	Southern Sudan Independence Movement/ Army
SSDF	Southern Sudan Defence Forces
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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INTRODUCTION

The Child Participation study commissioned by Save the Children Sweden in 2006 in southern Sudan will be important to inform SCS and other actors' future work with children so as to realize meaningful participation of children in matters that affect them. The study outcome is expected to stimulate animated discussion on practical ways of working with children and more so the roles children could play on matters that affect them. The study will also be a useful advocacy tool. It cannot go unnoticed that the study is an eye opener to some valuable *participation* dilemmas surrounding children's rights issues in southern Sudan. Overall, the outcome of the study is privileged to report that children in southern Sudan want to be part of what is happening around them such as with their peers, families, in the school or learning spaces¹, community and political and government arenas that affect them.

The children of southern Sudan have spoken and therefore this report belongs to them. Over 90 per cent of the children interviewed want to be involved meaningfully and participate in matters that affect their lives. The major challenge faced by the study is to identify practical ways and means to work with children and other stakeholders in southern Sudan to be able to facilitate meaningful participation of children in different set ups including the family, school, community, national and global level. Due to the effects of war for many years, the voices of children from southern Sudan have not been listened to or given much attention. Now that peace has come, the study aims to encourage children and adults to listen to each other. This will further facilitate children to discover and unlock their untapped potentials.

We urge the Government of southern Sudan, being the primary duty bearer, and other secondary duty bearers such as teachers, parents, religious organisations, civil society, UN Agencies, International agencies, NGOs and the private sector, families, parents and friends and all the people of southern Sudan to support the views and aspirations of the children. A democratic society is built through the active participation of all its members, including the children.

¹ Learning spaces includes semi permanent classrooms, grass thatched structures, under trees and other open grounds

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

Children's rights are part of human rights. Human rights are also called natural rights which are inalienable and guaranteed to a person simply because they are human. They are not earned, bought or inherited and everybody is entitled to them equally regardless of their sex, colour, origin, age, class, race, religious or political beliefs.

The most powerful instrument in promoting children's rights is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), adopted in 1989 and to which to date practically all countries world-wide, save for the USA and Somalia, have ratified. The UNCRC include the full spectrum of human rights (civic, political, economic, social and cultural), all of which need to be treated with equal respect. At the same time, the African Charter for the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) complements the UNCRC by addressing the rights of the child in the African context.

Article 12 has been identified by the Committee on the Rights of the Child as a general principle of relevance to implementation of the whole Convention. All other articles require consideration of the child's right to be heard, and to have his or her views taken seriously. Specifically, the child has a right to be heard in relation to any judicial or administrative proceedings affecting the child, relevant to, for example, articles 9, 10, 21, 25, 37, 40. Also linked to the child's participation rights are articles 13 (freedom of expression), article 14 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion) and article 15 (freedom of association). The level and form of participation depends on the evolved capacities and capabilities (cognitive, psychological and emotional development) of the children involved. These levels are not fixed and do not correspond to a certain age but vary from child to child and can depend on the social-cultural context of the child.

The history of children in various part of the World indicates that millions of children have been traditionally and socially excluded from families, communities and in societal agenda. Despite the integral part children and young people play in families, schools and communities, they are more often than not regarded with a lower social status than adults. This perception has minimised the opportunities for many children to participate meaningfully in decision making as equal partners. Children are not a homogenous group. They differ in age, maturity, social and economic status². The generation gap between children and adults has further lead to various challenges that has been a drawback towards the development of meaningful child participation. Lack of trust, misconception and prejudices and ignorance, cultural, and traditional beliefs and preconceived ideas about the abilities of children have been cited as some of the major challenges facing children's participation in many societies around the World. Many outdated notions and beliefs portray children as transient, chaotic and unreliable while portraying adults as experts of children's needs - they 'know' what children need. "Because all adults have been children once, and because they are felt to understand the 'real' needs of children better than the children themselves, the notion of asking children their views directly is rarely entertained and usually seen as unnecessary."³ Additionally, participation of citizens in matters that concern them is not always developed in many countries. If adults do not enjoy their right to participation, that obviously reflects on the level of participation of children as well. The implication of lack of participation by adults is that children too are denied participation.

² UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

³ *Towards a children's agenda* Page 38

The principle that childhood is a period of entitlement to special protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation cannot be overlooked in southern Sudan which has been devastated by the longest civil war in African history, ranging for over forty years, with the last twenty years being the worst resulting in a heavy toll in human lives and property⁴. During the civil war period, southern Sudan was under SPLM thus a non state actor that could not sign any international treaties and agreements. In 1995, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the South Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM) committed themselves to the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Later in 2000, the SPLM established the Secretariat of Women, Gender and Child Welfare (SWGWCW) and mandated it as the focal policy and governance unit to deal with the issues of women, gender and child welfare. With the CPA and establishment of government, GoSS set up the Ministry of Gender, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs as the docket in charge of children's welfare.

As a result of the civil war lasting for over two decades, children and adolescents in southern Sudan still exhibit traumatic experiences of violence, separation, fear, loss of the family, home, familiar surroundings, friends; lack of opportunities for education; loss of self-respect and self-confidence; lack of opportunities for play and recreation; and an uncertainty future. It is however important to recognize that all children and adolescents have basic physiological, social and emotional needs which must be met to ensure healthy development. Some needs are shared in common with adults, but others are specific to particular ages and stages during childhood. For example, very young children and especially girls have a particular need for consistent, secure patterns of care and nurturance, though these needs can be adequately met through a wide range of family and community systems. In addition, if the specific needs of girls are not adequately met, young girls' development may be impaired and this may have long-term impact into motherhood.

But as evident in this report, the image of an ignorant, incompetent and incapable child thus created does not match with that of the '*Sudanese child*'. The girls and boys interviewed during the study depict children who actively contribute to their own lives and their community's subsistence; they have responsibilities, experiences, and are capable of making informed decisions. The study outcome thus reflects the aspirations, the mood, feelings, hope and fears, as established during data collection.

The study may be said to have a strong ray of hope which is strengthened by the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. The Peace era presents Save the Children Sweden with an opportunity to re-examining the situation of children's rights, and more so the right to participation. The organization is seeking to establish and strengthen formal and practical ways, means and systems that will promote the rights of children.

The Sudan

The Republic of Sudan is the largest country in Africa covering eight percent of the continent and two percent of the world's land surface, with an area of 2,376,000 square kms. It encompasses a wide range of physical diversity ranging from desert and semi desert in the north to tropical rain forests in the east and Equatorial rain forests and swamps of the south. The country is bordered by; Northern Sudan to the North, Chad and Central African Republic to the West, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to the

⁴ Situational Analysis of Children in South Sudan, June 2003, page 6

Southwest, Uganda and Kenya to the south and Ethiopia to the East. The river Nile, the longest river in Africa, and its tributaries meander through southern Sudan.

Sudan attained its independence in 1956 but has been devastated by civil war for about forty years making it the longest civil war in the African history. The two-decade civil war, waged mostly between the Government of Sudan in the North and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in the South, was one of the world's longest-running wars. Experts estimate that the war caused over 2 million deaths either directly or indirectly by famine, illness and other threatening situations. The war encompassed North-South hostilities and various localized conflicts within different regions. Religion, ethnic identity, colonial history, land, food and desire for control over natural resources, particularly oil, water and grazing land, all played a role in the outbreak and perpetuation of the armed conflict.

Since the war began, the most affected by Sudan's civil war have been the children and youth living in the southern Sudan. Of the over 2 million people reported to have died and the over 4 million people displaced, 75% were children. At the same time, more than 50,000 children have been orphaned due to the civil war, and another 170,000 have no information about their biological parents. Further consequences of the war were that children experienced discrimination, exploitation and various forms of abuse. The war also destroyed the existing infrastructure such as schools, law enforcement structures and health facilities among others and upto today, children are still in dire need of education and protection.

In January 2005, the warring parties signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement⁵. The CPA provided for the restructuring of the GoS, including the adoption of an interim national constitution, the establishment of a Government of National Unity (GoNU) and a semi-autonomous authority in the South known as the Government of southern Sudan (GoSS). Under the one-country, two-system model, the North and South share power, resources and wealth and maintain separate armies but for the old garrison towns. Overall, implementation of the CPA has been extremely slow and difficult.⁶ For instance, in November 2006, fighting erupted in Malakal⁷ between government forces and the SPLA resulting in the deaths of at least 150 people, including 50 civilians, and injuring approximately 400. Insecurity in the South has also led some pastoralist communities to maintain defence forces, such as the White Army, linked to the Lou clan of Nuer ethnic group, in order to protect livestock. On the other hand, the international community has shifted attention to the dire situation in Darfur which has failed to remain deeply engaged in the implementation of the CPA, allowing various parties to exploit gaps in the CPA, fuelling underlying ethnic tensions and hampering efficient implementation.

With peace, a new political order negotiated on the need to develop the human rights culture, democracy and economical growth for the people of Sudan was established. The current population in southern Sudan is projected at almost 7.5 million and with the peaceful environment, it is estimated to grow at 2.5 % per annum. In addition, over 570,000 refugees and an estimated 3,500,000 internally displaced people are expected to return to southern Sudan from the North, neighbouring countries and from within the South. Increased population figures are expected to intensify pressure on existing limited

⁵ The CPA was negotiated over a three-year period with facilitation by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), putting an end to direct hostilities. The CPA provides for a six-year interim period, at the end of which the people of southern Sudan will hold a referendum on whether they wish to remain part of a united Sudan, under the government system established by the CPA, or if they wish to secede.

⁶ While the agreement ended one of Africa's longest-running wars, it only encompassed two parties to the conflict, resulting in a lack of broad support throughout the country, according to the International Crisis Group (ICG), *Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement: The Long Road Ahead*, March 2006.

⁷ The Malakal incident marked the heaviest fighting between the SPLA and GoNU forces since the signing of the CPA

basic services such as child health, protection and education. Currents projections state that 1.5 million children (more than 50 % girls) in southern Sudan are still out of school. Out of 400,000 (27% girls) students currently enrolled in Primary, only 2% (0.8% girls) complete school. Today, the increase in enrolment rates per year is only 1.2%. The average student-teacher ratio in southern Sudan is 42:1⁸. The lean teaching force of 7000 (7% female) has low morale and capacity due to lack/delayed payments and lack/limited training. Majority of the teachers are untrained volunteers thus limited teaching skills in content and methodology. Only 7% of teachers are qualified. The effect of these include teachers whose capacity to involve children in day to day learning activities is limited and coupled with chronic absenteeism subsequently leading to poor quality of education..

Currently, there are numerous ongoing attempts to negotiate sustainability of the peace realized in southern Sudan so as to build confidence, restore trust and promote reconciliation, tolerance and appreciation of each other. Protection issues for children remain to some extent a challenge as new phenomena such as increase of children living and working on the markets and children getting in contact with the law emerge.

GoSS as the primary duty bearer is increasingly realizing the importance of children's rights. GoSS Interim Constitution is perceived as a very progressive legislation to promote and protect children's rights. The Child Bill⁹ under section 7 is explicit about children being heard¹⁰. Generally speaking, there have been very few explicit changes in the situation for girls and boys in southern Sudan since signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Some of the reasons are that the process of getting the government in place has taken longer time than estimated in the CPA. This implies that GoSS still lacks the human capacity and resources to implement its programmes. Also, only a meagre part of the funding pledged by the international community in Norway in April 2005 has been received. And even for the little funding received on health, education, road and water, allocation has not necessarily been done with children's rights in mind.

Purpose of the child participation study

This study was informed by SCS global work and knowledge on children's participation and based on the premise that there should be no difference between adults and children when it comes to their involvement in matters affecting them while taking into account their evolving capacities and the social and cultural context in which they live. The task ahead was to find out the right approaches and appropriate methods to involve the children in various levels such as in school, community and national levels.

The study was a first concerted effort by SCS to determine how children, parents, communities, government officials and other child focused actors perceive children's participation and what needs to be done to step up efforts to promote meaningful involvement of children.

The specific aims of the study were to determine the gaps and opportunities for practical participation of girls and boys in Southern Sudan in all matters that affect them, to identify the underlying (root) causes hindering meaningful children's participation,

⁸ The Child Bill is expected to be deliberated in parliament in the coming year (2007).

¹⁰ **Child Bill Section 7: Determination of Matters Concerning a Child**

In all matters relating to a child, whether before a Court or before any other person, every effort shall be made to determine the matter expeditiously; *provided that*, a child has a right to be heard whenever any matters concerning them are discussed.

establish some of the positive aspects and forums for participation already existing within the communities and to come up with salient recommendations on how to address the gaps and optimize on the opportunities as a way to step up the realisation of children's rights by SCS, government and other child focused actors.

CHAPTER 2: STUDY METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in the three states of Lakes, Jonglei and Northern Bahr El Ghazal¹¹ during a period of six weeks, from 1st of November to 10th of December 2006. The study was conducted by a research team, which was led by a consultant with the assistance of a translator. Save the Children Sweden staff assisted in the logistical arrangements. Specifically, the Community Mobilisers¹² and Field Officer assisted in contacting and mobilising the respondents.

The main mode of collecting data was individual interviews¹³ and focus group discussions with children, parents, teachers, members of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and Community Support Groups (CSGs), government officials, local authorities and community leaders, as well as professionals from agencies working directly or indirectly with children's rights and Save the Children Sweden support staff. In total, 520 children, 100 primary school teachers, 80 parents and members of Community support Groups and Parent Teacher Associations, and 50 professionals and government officials directly took part in the study.

The main target of the study were girls and boys in the three states in southern Sudan, whose participation at family, school, community and national level the study sought to explore. The children who participated in the study were between 5 and 18 years old. The majority of these girls and boys were *school going children*. The study team also spoke with a few children out of schools, disabled children, former child soldiers, and children in the cattle camps.

To ensure gender equity, the study intended to engage as many girls as boys. The rationale of advocating for both girls and boys was deliberate to boost opportunities for girls to contribute to the study. It was however evident that more boys than girls took part in the study and boys always tended to dominate during discussions. Apart from the discussions and interviews, children also expressed themselves through drawings and art presentations, poems, songs and traditional dances, games and sports. During the visits to the schools, the children were prepared to welcome the study team to their school and looked pleased to receive visitors.

Some of the children interviewed were members of **child rights clubs**. In total, 60 members of the clubs in Cueibet Girls and Cueibet Boys and Rumbek Girls Primary School participated in the study. The focus on child rights clubs was based on the premise that child rights clubs are a common way of mobilizing children and focus on different activities, including sports, drama, music, and debating which then provide

¹¹ (in Footnote refer to annex Which indicates the date, state and number of participants involved in the data collection activity)

¹²Community Mobilisers are employed by Save the Children Sweden, with the responsibility to initiate, coordinate, organise, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate child protection and development programme activities at grassroots/payam level (payam is the smallest geo-administrative unit in the political set-up in southern Sudan) They create awareness on child rights in communities and among the civil authorities, link up with schools to monitor enrolment, train teachers, as well as form child support structures, mainly Community Support Groups and Parent-Teachers Associations and conduct trainings on their roles and responsibilities. Hence, the community Mobilisers are very well familiar with the cultural and social circumstances in the local communities in southern Sudan.

¹³ Please refer to Appendix I for a full copy of the interview questions

children with a platform to express their views on various matters that affect them in schools and community in general.

Community Support Groups (CSGs) consist of members of the community, who are elected as volunteers to create awareness on child protection issues and monitor and mitigate child rights violations in their community. CSGs are important community structures for the best interest of children since the members live with the children and understand the challenges they face at the community level. To gain access to the Community Support Groups, the community Mobilisers contacted and organised meetings with 3 Community Support Groups in Cueibet and Rumbek in Lakes and Akiem in NBEG. The chairpersons of the CSGs made the introductions, briefed the members on the purpose of the study and the agenda of the meeting was set. After the preliminaries, the members were invited to ask questions which triggered off animated discussions ranging from general child rights and protection issues to how they relate with children both at the individual level as well as members of the CSGs. During the discussions, all members were given an opportunity to express their views.

The **Parent-Teacher Associations** (PTAs) act on the interests of the school and the community. PTAs are school management structures, with representatives from the school, teachers and community members. The head teacher of the school is a member of the PTA and mainly the secretary. Most Parent-Teacher Associations are not formally structured. This study included visits to PTAs in four schools¹⁴, where focus group discussions were held.¹⁵ The aim of including this group was to find out how they interact with school children and their perception and understanding of the concept of participation vice a vis their role as a school management members. The group's views about children were also sought since they are ideal representatives of their community. After introductions, the study team engaged the PTA members in a focus group discussion. The Chairperson of the PTAs was the chair of the forum.

Government officials and local leaders, including Governors, Directors, Commissioners and Advisors, also participated in the study and contributed their views and ideas on children in general and children's right to participation in particular. Specifically, the study sought to establish what plans have been put in place or being considered to encourage children and young people's participation.

The study team also sought the opinions and views of other **professionals** operating with different sectors and organisations in southern Sudan. The objective was to get a wide perception of how they interact with children in the course of their work and how their work relates to children. Some of the professionals interviewed were doctors, road construction engineers/experts, UN advisors, development experts and missionaries.

There was a deliberate intention in this study to interview **Save the Children Sweden administrative staff** as per the recommendations of the internal assessment of SCS's capacity to promote child participation, conducted in 2006.¹⁶ Hence, the study team met several support staff, including cooks, security guards/watchmen, drivers and compound cleaners. Discussions with the staff sought to determine their views as part of an

¹⁴ Sunrise Academy and Rumbek Girls Primary School in Lakes; Paliu Primary School in Jonglei; and Manyiel Community Centre, Aweil, East County, in Northern Bahr El Ghazal.

¹⁵ The Community Mobiliser in a particular payam was mandated to organise the logistics of the meeting and set the agenda of the discussion.

¹⁶ Save the Children Sweden, SouthernSouthern Sudan Programme, 2006: *Assessment of Save the Children Sweden's Capacity to Promote Child Participation*, p. 9.

organization that advocates for children's rights, how their community perceives them, how they relate with their own children and those in their communities.

Ethical considerations

With all the respondents, groups or individuals, informed consent was sought. The consent process entailed a brief introduction of the interviewers and their role as SCS representatives, an explanation of the purpose of the study, how the information collected would be used to promote the rights of children in southern Sudan. Respondents were made to understand that they had a choice to grant or refuse to take part in the interviews or discussions. They were also informed of confidentiality. Children were informed that the study would not use their names directly but consent about use of what they said as verbatim expressions and school names were sought during the deliberations. In some instances, the teachers or parents wanted to give their consent on behalf of the children, but with some explanations, only the children's own consent was accepted. The teachers, local government and professionals also gave their consent and hence the quotes used reflect the consent granted. In situations where the respondents could not communicate in English, interviews and discussions were conducted in the local language, Dinka, through a translator.

In order to create a child friendly environment and to encourage the children to participate and speak up and express their views freely, the interviewers joined the children in playing ball games before conducting the interviews or focus group discussions. Overall, the study was guided by the principles of inclusiveness and participation. This was reflected in the entire process, including the formulation of the study objectives and the design of the study tools, data collection, analysis and report writing. This spirit was manifested in the focus to include girls and children with disabilities, whose voices tend to remain inaudible.

Data analysis

The primary data collected in this study was mainly qualitative in nature and was analysed using the generative themes identified through the self developed respondents' categories and then presented in the findings section of this report. The use of secondary data has deliberately been limited to SC global understanding of children's participation, the UNCRC and the practice standards so as to beef up the findings of the report.

Study limitations

Several factors may have affected the methodology and study process thus influencing the outcome of the study in one way or another, positively or negatively. Such factors include the dependency syndrome, understanding of concept of child participation, and language barrier among others.

Dependency syndrome

From the discussions, it was evident that many organisations in southern Sudan have been providing material support to communities which has promoted dependency and raised expectations within the community. This was evidenced by the fact that wherever the study team went during data collection the children would ask for materials support from the team. Children would ask for such items as school uniforms, shoes, books and even food. Some of them indicated that other organizations gave them food while others gave them school supplies and therefore expected the same from the team. They wondered; 'Why don't you give us the same, while other do'. This may have influenced

the outcome and affected the ensuing discussions. The fact that their expectations were not met left them disappointed. It was however discussed with the children and other respondents that the study was part of the wider SCS work in southern Sudan which many could identify.

Low literacy levels: There is low literacy levels among respondents, making it difficult for them to understand some of the concepts shared during the study. This was not a new phenomenon as past experience on several studies already undertaken by SCS¹⁷ in southern Sudan had indicated lack of education as a major challenge and a threat when planning to undertake research activities in the communities. Based on the lessons learnt, the study team engaged the services of a Dinka translator and used various participatory data collection techniques such as FGDs with peers as facilitators, drawings, songs/music and ball games to generate ideas and keep respondents motivated to share their experiences.

Understanding of participation

The concept of child participation was a new one to most of these those involved in the study. Children and adults alike found it rather difficult to understand what child participation means. In some instances, the work that children do in the families or community was taken to be synonymous with children participating. It is no doubt therefore that the fact that there is limited understanding of the concept may have influenced the mind set during the discussions thus affecting the study outcome.

Language barrier

Throughout the sessions, the process of engagement with children and adults was in English then translated to Dinka and vice versa. Though some of the respondents communicated their views and ideas in English, majority of the respondents relied on the support of the translator. The use of the Dinka language was appropriate as respondents elicited more confidence but the gains may also have affected the message flow and understanding by the respondents.

Male children participation

The findings of this report are dominated by the views of boys as opposed to the views of girls. The majority of the respondents in schools, PTAs, CSGs and in all other respondents' categories were males and even where the girls and women were involved the discussions were dominated by the boys. The report describes the girls and women as shy.

¹⁷ Studies conducted in 2006 on Non Discrimination and Physical and Humiliating Punishment and An Assessment of Civil Societies Initiatives in southern Sudan,

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS

Existing community perceptions about girls and boys

A large majority of the adult respondents indicated that children are valued, special and important within the community. Children are seen as a source of wealth and respect. They represent a future for the community and are a blessing, gift and heritage from God. If one does not bear a child, it is viewed as though it is a curse from God. Children are seen as security for the future and any one without children is prone to a future without support. Children are therefore seen as assets or investment for the future. "If a person has no child he/she lacks respect, and wealth." Maberuy. They are the community's hope. Children are regarded as very important and the source of continuity of life. From the above comments it was evident that all the respondents value children and would like to ensure they grow to become responsible family or community members in the future so that they can assist the parents at their old age.

"Children are like seeds, we hope to harvest through them, our Dinka culture calls upon us to bring up responsible children" Daniel.

"Children are a source of riches, one can be poor today but because of their children they can rise from poverty. In our Dinka culture, children are very important and special." Angelo.

were not for the children."

Children according to teachers are the reason for living; they are a source of inspiration and a major resource to the community and country in general. In literal terms children are our employers. "We could not be working as teachers if it

Most of the children interviewed had different expectations and knowledge about child participation. At the onset of every discussions, many children did not understand what child participation means. The translator however tried to explain that the equivalent of *Children and Participation* in Dinka could be 'kuoiny de medh'. Though this was not easy for most of the children to comprehend, it enabled them to make meaningful contributions. The discussions called for further explanations about child rights and why it is important for children to express themselves and participate in issues that affect them.

In schools children are involved in a few activities. These happen during educational events¹⁸, national holidays and other public open day activities such as sports, music festivals and other school related activities. The other forum where children views are aired are through child right clubs. However, participation is either at the manipulative, *decorative or tokenism stage*¹⁹ as children are involved in various activities without their consent, for the interest of the adults, and adults take the lead. In this case, children are either used to pass messages through songs, poems and theatre or memory verses which are more often than not prepared by the teachers. To some extent, participation is more informed in child rights clubs where children are involved in their own matters of leadership and advocacy.

¹⁸ Educational events include Girls Education Day which is commemorated on 7th July, Educational campaign events.....

¹⁹ Promoting *Children's Participation in Democratic Decision Making process UNICEF 2001* by Gerrison Lansdown. Professor Roger Harts - *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship* Florence, Italy Innocent Research Centre Unicef 1992

Discussion with the schoolchildren indicated that they yearned to be involved in discussions about how their schools are run. They want to be involved in influencing the course of administration in schools because they too are important stakeholders. For instance, they indicated that they would appreciate if they were involved in electing their prefects, setting school rules or have an opportunity to express themselves about how the schools are run. In Agang Riel Primary School for instance, one of the pupils, indicated that they are involved in electing their prefects but the teachers eventually decided who takes up the positions.

"We are told to elect prefects, but teachers decided who eventually becomes prefects".

From the discussions with school going children, it was clear that girls and boys would like to participate and be able to influence their school environment and administration. However, as it is today, most of the decisions regarding school routines and regulations are decided exclusively by the school administration and teachers. For example, in Cueibet Boys Primary school, the school rules for the students and teachers were put next to each other on one side of the staff room wall. When we asked how the rules for the pupils were developed, one of the teachers said that teachers write the rules for the pupils without consulting the boys and girls; *'We make rules for the students'*.

Although many children indicated their willingness to take an active role in the decision-making process in their school, there seemed to be lack of understanding of meaningful participation as the above scenario was common in most of the schools visited. Both pupils and teachers reported that the teachers make the school rules or have the final word on who becomes the prefect without consulting the pupils. However, the teachers were reluctant when the study team probed further the justification for them to make the rules for the pupils or decide who become the school or class prefects. Teachers seemed convinced that it was in order for them to determine the school rules for the children since children lack discipline and therefore cannot be trusted. Some teachers even defended their action saying that it was futile to consult children in the formulation of school rules as they would not know. The teachers indicated that "they know what rules are good for the school." It was clear from the discussion that teachers were determined to defend their position in making the schools regulations for the students or electing the school prefects, and decide other roles and responsibilities of children in schools. But to the contrary, the teachers indicated that they, unlike the students are always involved in the formulation of their own rules by the school management *because they are adults*.

One significant finding was that the participation envisioned by children was different from the one that the teachers had in mind. The teachers preferred to initiate activities that they consider best for children based on their own opinions and not the children's needs, while the children hoped that their opinions would be sought before decisions were arrived at in the school management. This is well elucidated by the words mentioned by one pupil in Cuibet School that they would appreciate *"if we were involved in choosing our own prefects but we are not allowed."* Meaningful participation becomes elusive in this case when children are involved in electing their leaders but the final decisions lies with the teachers who determine who actually becomes a prefect. Another finding relates to the *teachers' fixed attitudes* as expressed by teachers and pupils. Teachers' belief that children are vessels meant to receive wisdom from teachers and adults without questioning and only in very few instances are the children provided with advice or guidance and encouragement to enable them realize their own rights and to help each

other without having to turn to adults. The fact that the children are asked in some schools to appoint their preferred leaders and eventually the final decision is made by the adults is a perfect example.

These examples show lack of a common understanding of the concept of children's participation between the teachers and pupils. Moreover, teachers exposed an adult attitude about children's inability to make *good choices or decision without adults*. The implication of such actions may include propagating a non participation culture or lack of commitment among teachers and school management to create and facilitate forums and avenues in which children can express themselves in school. The above scenario shows that there is need to sensitise children, teachers and school management on the importance of allowing children to participate, and express themselves freely on matters that affect their lives within the school environment.

Child Rights Clubs

The results of this study show that the level of knowledge on children's rights among the children differs between the different regions and schools in southern Sudan. Children who are members of child rights clubs distinguished themselves as quite informed about their rights as opposed to other children. The girls and boys who were club members were able to list their rights, including the right to education, freedom to express themselves, the right to have clothes, shelter and food. These children were confident and authoritative in defending their standpoints and their rights.

However, not so many child rights clubs are active in southern Sudan. When it comes to the child rights clubs supported by Save the Children Sweden, active clubs are in the process of being identified and strengthened in Rumbek East and Cuibet Counties, while in Malualkon and Mabior the existing clubs mainly focus on games and sports. It is however known that many children have been motivated to join clubs because they want to benefit from shoes and other games and sports materials and equipments. The reason for this was, according to the children, lack of proper information on the objectives and benefits of the clubs. *Cueibet Child Rights Club* consists of 40 members from Cueibet Boys and Cueibet Girls Primary School, with 20 members from each school. The two schools are located close to each other and the decision to form one child rights club was to encourage the girls' active participation in children affairs, as well as promoting cooperation between girls and boys in the two schools and community.

Our school is supported by Save the Children Sweden. When we were informed that we start our child rights club, we did not understand clearly about the objectives. But we have been trained on our rights and importance of the club. We are proud and we encourage other schools to establish child rights clubs. John Marial 17 years old, Chairman, elected by the club members of the Cueibet Boys and Girls Child Rights Club.

The concept of participation in the family and Community

Within the family and community level, children's participation is seen in form of the labour that children offer to their parents, close family members, clan and community at large. The support girl children give to their mothers including fetching of water and firewood, babysitting, cooking and other household chores constitute *participation* in the family level. The boys are involved in supporting the family through grazing, fencing, fishing and hunting. The same roles for boys and girls may be performed at the community level e.g. Boys may be involved in herding cattle. During the times of war, boys are expected to team up with men to provide protection to the community while

girls' join the women to support those who are fighting by providing foodstuff. One of the key finding on how children participate in the family and community was that children are generally viewed as incapable of making good decisions in the family and community and are usually left out in family decisions. Children are also not asked for their views even when they are called upon to do tasks such as clearing the compound or sweeping their classrooms in schools or at home when they are to take care of the goats or watch on their siblings. In such instances, *children are directed* by the teachers or bigger children and parents or any other adult present, and they are expected to do the tasks without questioning.

Attitude about the girl child

The girl child in southern Sudan as in most other communities is a valued child for various reasons. She is seen as a source of wealth for the family through the bride wealth that is paid during marriage. In addition, the girl child is valued because she will eventually grow “to be the mother of the man’s children and to serve men.”

“Here in Sudan you don’t joke with girls, because they are booked when they are very young, and cows are paid. If you play around with girls you will be killed because somebody has already paid very many cows to the father of the girl”. Mao

Relative to the boy child, the girl child is discriminated against because “she cannot serve as protection to the family or community, she is weak and will eventually be married and leave the home stead to benefit another family”. A female respondent summed it up as follows: “Let me speak as a woman, I believe the girls and women in southern Sudan have been victims of abuse for along time in our history as a community. Some women have been forced to mark their face, get many children without questions, and sometimes beaten and mistreated, that’s the ugly history about girls; they are not seen on the same line as boys.”- Rose.

Many respondents, including the members of CSGs, agreed that the girl child in southern Sudan is over worked and sometimes abused and neglected. The majority of teachers observed that women and girls have suffered discrimination and abuse for many years and this affects their enrolment and retention rates in school. At the same time, some of the statements from the teachers indicate that the tradition of early and forced marriage and the image of girls as a major source of income is too deeply rooted. This was graphically put by one CSG member as he tried to explain how girls are perceived. *‘When my wife was about to deliver, the traditional birth attendants came to our home; I had to go away, when I came back the first question I asked was is it a boy or a girl? When I was told a girl I was very happy that I will get cows now and I will be rich.*

Owing to the sentiments raised, the girl child faces many obstacles regarding her participation in matters that affect her. The first obstacle is mainly because she is a girl. The study found out that there was both explicit and implicit preference of the boy child to the girl child. There are various stereotypes about the female and male children within the community. Some of those mentioned in the course of discussion with the respondents were that girls are weak and therefore cannot be involved in war unlike the male child. That they are fit only for housework. The boys on the other hand are seen to be strong and therefore able to provide security for the family and the country. Moreover, boys represent the families’ posterity and heritage hence they are preferred to the girl child. “I am sure if I have a boy my properties and my name will remain for posterity,” said Matthias. However, some respondents indicated that all children are equal and that they should be treated the same way. They noted that girls have suffered on the basis of their gender. “All children are the same, although I know they have so many differences, but they are both children, as a teacher I have no preference for children, but I know girls have suffered on the basis of gender” Abraham.

The study further discovered that socialization and gender roles further encourage boys to relate to their fathers and girls to their mothers because there are some issues, which concern girls that men cannot handle. One man, a parent and PTA member in one of the schools visited was quoted as wondering what he would do if his daughter came and told him that she was having her monthly period. What would I

do? Similarly, the girls are brought up believing that they cannot share such matters with anybody else other than their mothers; *When I'm in my menstruation period, I cannot speak about it to anybody, only to my mother, not even the teachers*". Other obstacles that perpetuate a non participation culture among girls include early and forced marriage, too much domestic work, traditional practices that discourage girls and women from talking in front of men. During this study, very few girls and women were found in the public domain and thus only a few were involved in the study and even where they attended the sessions, they were shy and only contributed ideas only after being asked or with much prompting.. However, in all the locations visited, many girls were involved in songs and dances. All these dilemmas further binder women and girls from participating in key decision-making processes among peers of opposite sex, at the household, family, school, community and the national levels.

Community attitudes towards children with disability

Children with disabilities are a group which face additional difficulties when trying to make their voices heard. The traditional belief among the Dinka is that disability is associated with a curse and punishment by the gods. If a person gives birth to a child with any disability, it is associated with evil and/or a criminal deed. This was the main reason why some respondents did not even want to talk about disability. Some parents could not fathom their children being disabled. A member of one Community Support Group in Maluakon said that in case he gets a child who is blind, deaf, or physically challenged he would be very discouraged with the wife and gods. *"We have children with disabilities in southern Sudan, but these children are hidden in the houses. We have a stigma about the disabled as we associate disability with punishment from the gods. But with proper education on children with special need, we will be able to teach others on how to accept and care for them"*, said a Teacher in Marial Primary School. In the course of the study, majority of the respondents indicated that disabled children are quite common in the community although the majority are those young people whose limbs have been severed through the war.

The respondents indicated that disability is a big challenge within the community and that they are not able or even ready to deal with it. It was revealed that many parents hide their disabled children to avoid ridicule and embarrassment. During the study, the study team met several children with differing degrees of disability loitering in the markets but no one knew of any institutions and organisations in southern Sudan that focus on support and treatment for children with disabilities, or training for teachers and other professionals on how to deal with these category of children.²⁰ Many people, including teachers, lack the capacity to teach and handle children with special needs. The teachers for instance indicated that that many of the disabled children are not taken to school and even where they have been taken to school it is a big challenge to teach them as there are no trained teachers. One of the teachers quipped *"you know many of us are not trained even to teach normal children, so it is even worse when we talk about teaching children with disability."* John.

In terms of facilities for the disabled, many of the respondents indicated that there are very limited facilities for all the children in the community. This is even worse for the disabled, this was said to be true for the children in schools, police stations and other areas where special attention for the disabled is required. An inspector in a police station in trying to show the severity of the situation noted *"If normal people including the police lack salaries, uniforms and other facilities what about people with disability?"*

²⁰ The study "Children Discriminated Against in southern Sudan", conducted by Save the Children Sweden, Southern Sudan programme, 2007, provides further information on the situation of children with disabilities.

However, the story of John Chiech (see below) clearly illustrate that there are opportunities for children with disabilities to stand up for their rights and gain respect in their communities:

John Chiech, 17 years old, is physically challenged, and a member of the child rights club of Cueibet Boys and Cueibet Girls Primary schools. Wherever he passed by, fellow children and adults, especially at the market, used to make fun of him (mock) because of his disability. One day he decided to go and see the area Commissioner in his office, who is also physically challenged like John. When he entered the Commissioner's office John was asked to explain his problem. John responded that the community was abusing them (implying him and the Commissioner). The Commissioner was furious and organised a public forum, and John was called to address the issue. At the same meeting, the Commissioner stated that it was wrong to abuse children and adults with disability.

Since that incident, John became very popular in the area. The child rights clubs has organised several workshops to empower the children to know their rights. During the visit in Cueibet John took the study team around the area, and his impact in the community was noticeable.

This case story indicates the negative perception the communities have towards children with disabilities. There is need to continue creating awareness against discrimination of children and adults with disability. The negative perception against children with disabilities inhibits children to speak and participate in decision making process. It kills their self-esteem, ego and drive.

Adults' Interaction with Children

In order to find out how adults' view and relate with boys and girls; if and how they act to realise children's right to participate, interviews and discussions were carried out with parents, teachers, members of PTAs, community leaders and CSGs, government officials and local leaders, as well as other professionals and support staff of Save the Children Sweden. The findings from the various groups are presented in the following section.

Teachers

Teachers are very influential and play a critical role in children's lives. They assist in the development, formation and construction of the character, moral and intellectual capacities of children. Many teachers referred to children as the seed, the school as a garden, the teachers as the farmers and education as water. Children are very important to many teachers, who are determined to make a difference to the lives of children. In the words of one of the teachers interviewed from *Paliau Primary School, Mabior*, 'the war is over but the battle is on. If there are children not going to school, we still have a lot of work to do. The battle now is not physical, but mental. I'm optimistic that we shall have an established education system and all our children will be educated'.

Parent-Teacher Associations members

The **PTA members** interviewed were all in agreement that children are important. Some of them developed their thoughts about children, their conviction to promote the best for their children and how they interact with children through their role as parents and PTA members. *'We are concerned with many issues of our children; we have advised the head teacher to ensure that our pupils have the chance to elect their class representatives, said the PTA chairperson, Gordim Primary School.* A member of the PTA in Paliau Primary School noted that *when in the community, he observe what children are doing and in case he discovers a problem with a child, he call the child and inquire what could be the problem.*

Community Support Groups

Some members of the **Community Support Groups** emphasised that children are important to the community and the nation. Children are the future leaders. Generally, members of the Community Support Groups reported that they relate with children in the home environment. CSGs have formed part of a very strong and effective network for tracing and reunification of unaccompanied children and children separated from their families. When interviewed, CSG members said they also give talks in community forums on non discrimination and the need to provide support to vulnerable children such as orphans, children with disabilities (CWDs) and the girl child. They also have played a big role in mobilizing the community to provide local resources for constructing structures that benefit children, particularly schools. The members also noted that they are a useful link between their respective communities and the children who are the primary target for SCS and other NGOs. Among other activities that CSG members have played roles beneficial to the children (not necessarily by SCS) include mobilization for school construction, school feeding programme and health related issues.

Members of the CSG emphasized that they are in close contact with parents and thus talk to parents on the need to protect children and inform the community mobilisers of the challenges children are facing in the community. Regarding how CSGs interact with children, this study was not able to establish how the CSGs promote children's participation. It was however established that there is a clear link between the roles and responsibility of CSGs and child protection in general. The study identified that CSG members are an important source of information on child rights violations children in the community. It would therefore be imperative for SCS to explore how the CSGs could promote child rights and specifically children's participation rights in the community.

Government Officials

The Government of southern Sudan (GoSS) has expressed its political will to enhance the development and protection for the children and give them a meaningful participation platform. This commitment is evident in the Interim Constitution of southern Sudan, which provides for children's rights, as well as the Child Bill 2006, which, once enacted, will provide children with thorough and comprehensive legal protection. The results of this study indicate that the commitment to children's rights and their development is also strong among state level governments and local leaders. *'Children are like seeds in a garden, we need to water them with education and uproot the weeds that may distract them from growing (that's to guide them and direct them) for the purpose of tomorrow'*, said a government official in Lakes states.

These sentiments were also shared other state officials. In Aweil East County, a state official said *'The Children in southern Sudan are our hope for tomorrow, any society or government that ignores its children has no future at all.'*

A commissioner in one county in Lakes state said, *'we are busy in providing the best for our children, and we shall not stop.'*

A Director of Education in Lakes state was convinced that southern Sudan now has a brighter future and he was optimistic that it is just a matter of time before children's rights will be fully implemented: *You know very well that we have just come from war. The peace agreement was signed in 2005. We are now setting up systems and planning for all our children. When*

you meet them, tell them to be patience and support us as we set our country to education liberation. Notably, the Director emphasised the government's need of capacity building so as to understand child participation and its relevance: Why don't you suggest for a workshop with senior government officials from all the states and train them on the importance of child participation.

A Government Development Advisor in one of the states was excited to talk about children's participation and encouraged the Government of southern Sudan to start thinking critically about children: *We need a national Children's Conference for Southern Sudan to develop an agenda with the children. This is what I call intergenerational equity where the old pass over the skills and wisdom to the children for purpose of continuity of our values and identities as a community.*

When the study team visited a police station in Lakes state, a senior police officer observed that in case children are involved in crime, and the police arrest them, he normally call the children in his office to understand their problem. He retaliated that the police stations have very small cells and since there are no separate cells for adults and children, it is imperative that efforts are put in place to ensure that children stay away from the at all costs. He however said that this is always not possible.

Professionals in southern Sudan

An Education Supervisor working with Lutheran World Federation in Kongor, Mabior, Jonglei State, agreed that the future of southern Sudan is in the children who are loitering in the markets and attending schools with untrained teachers: *I am an old man now; I saw this country during the war and now the time for peace. I am asking the world to support our children.* Another Humanitarian worker with Care International in Mabior, also stressed the importance of supporting the children in southern Sudan, since they are the future leaders: *The children are the next leaders of southern Sudan and we have to do everything possible to make their lives better.* A Road Surveyor working with Civicon Construction Company observed that he has seen great potential in the children of southern Sudan, which has to be unleashed: *Children need to be educated and exposed to the realities of the world. Here in southern Sudan there are no televisions, radio, newspapers or any sources of information for many people. The level of ignorance is very high. As a road construction officer, I have observed that this is in deed a great country, but children must be exposed and participate in development issues.*

Save the Children Sweden Support Staff

One aspect of this study was to find out how the support staff of Save the Children Sweden view children and if the fact that they work for a child rights organisation has had any impact on their interaction with children within their families and at the community. The preliminary findings of this study were also shared during SCS southern Sudan annual planning review meeting in Rumbek, generating much discussion especially on how SCS could work more directly with children.

Susanna is the senior cook in Save the Children Sweden's compound in Rumbek, and a mother. She has worked for several years with Save the Children Sweden. She was happy to participate in the interview, even though she was busy preparing lunch for the day: *I have never been interviewed before, but I see many people (staff) coming here to work and I don't know what they do. I only know this organisations works for children's rights.* In the community where Susanna lives people consult her about children and in cases of disputes between children she is often called to mediate: *I want to be trained about child rights because we are considered as the role models on matters of children within our community. I have learned a lot to listen to my children and share all domestic issues together. I'm working hard because I love my children and they are the main reason why I live.*

William Manyoun is 28 years old and works as a security guard with Save the Children Sweden. He is also a student at Ager Gum Primary schools in Primary 6 and a father of one child. When William got the opportunity to work he discovered that Save the Children Sweden is a child rights organisation that promotes the rights of children in southern Sudan. *Many staff of SCS have encouraged me to go school, that I can even be promoted to a senior position. I have learned a lot on issues of children's rights. I treat my child differently. I am aware of his rights and am ready to give him those rights.*

Peter Kan, a Community mobiliser, Save the Children Sweden, Cueibet summed it all by stating that in the Dinka culture, it is said that a child is not a tail, but the head meaning that children don't come last but first in the Dinka community.

Benefits of involving children

Based on the findings, the respondents cited various benefits accruing from children participation. They understood that child participation increased the children's capacity to contribute significantly to their own development, increase their capacity to understand their roles and responsibilities as children and they developed and sharpen their leadership qualities. Child participation it was further reported increased children's confidence and respect for other peoples' rights and promotes responsible citizens. In addition, children learn to appreciate adults and respect other people's opinions and rights, they gain leadership skills at an early age and they learn about society and how to handle societal matters. Through their participation, children also learn about government operations and therefore promote youthful leadership in the community. Children learn to make decisions at an early age.

Emerging opportunities for children's participation

This study is a prove that children are ready and willing to participate in matters that affect them and it is up to the adults to respect their right to participate, as well as acknowledge the benefits of involving children and gaining from their knowledge and experience. However, it is still a long way to go, even for a child rights organisation like Save the Children Sweden. If children's active involvement in decisions that affect their lives is to be respected, it is necessary to challenge the presumption that children are there to be seen but not to be heard as well as fight the traditions and cultural practices that inhibit meaningful participation. The children themselves made it clear that this has to be changed. They are ready, capable and willing to participate in the development of their country. This study is proposes that all duty bearers should feel obliged to support and encouraged girls and boys to take an active role in all matters that affect them at all levels.

As already noted, many children in southern Sudan are not included in the community agenda and the parents and adults represent their interests. Children rarely speak in adult dominated forums even if the subject of discussion involves them. But with peace, many respondents stated that there are emerging opportunities for boys and girls to actively take part in community development.

The signing of the CPA in 2005 presents the greatest opportunity for children. The cessation of the war offer children renewed hope and an opportunity for an interrupted way of life. With peace, children can pursue their right to education and participate in shaping their own destiny. This is a great opportunity that they can seize to participate in self-improvement and to contribute significantly to the development of their country.

With the new southern Sudan government children have the opportunity to access free education which will enhance the children capacity to participate. The fact that there is free primary education also poses an opportunity for the children of southern Sudan to acquire knowledge and skills to enable them participate meaningfully in nation building. They will be better placed to contribute well thought out ideas and indeed participate in important decision making forums.

In addition, the government has open forums in the community where children are encouraged to speak. The government is aware of children's rights and has some provisions on children's right in the constitution. GoSS has expressed its political will to enhance the development and protection for the children and give them a platform *to realise all their rights*. This commitment is evident in the Interim Constitution, which provides for children's rights, as well as the Child Bill 2006, which, once enacted, will provide children with thorough and comprehensive legal protection.

Ongoing awareness and trainings on child rights by child focused organizations and knowledge on the importance of *child rights clubs* including activities undertaken such as debating, drama, music and dance are other participation forums open to children. During the study, teachers, children and some government official saw the opportunity in SCS being at the forefront in promoting children's rights and supporting formation of child rights clubs in which children are trained to conduct their own affairs without adult interference.

A major opportunity for children and youth participation in most areas comes on Friday evening when young people from various centres meet in the market for cultural dances. This is mainly in Rumbek, freedom square, Kongor in Mabior, and Maluakon in NBEG. This is an important forum/event where the children express themselves and associate with other members of the community. This is the social forum that the children and young people use to socialise, interact and exchange ideas. It is an important forum for the young people mainly for engagement and show case of the latest fashion, news and updates from various parts of the community. However, the forums are also a threat as they pose a great danger to especially the girl child. Several incidents have left children abused in various cultural forums, especially during the night dance.

Games and sports, open days in schools where by parents, teachers, community and educational officials meet, faith based activities, child rights events, national events and community work e.g. in school construction are also significant avenues and forums for children to express themselves and engage with adults. In addition, there are other social (cultural) forums and activities that encourage children to express themselves which should be enhanced e.g. religious festivals and weddings where the girls are engaged in song and dance and chatting with the women. Their expressions during these forums are however through song and dance. Besides school set-ups, children engage in peer discourse in school, family set up and community in general where they express themselves freely in speech or through recreational activities. Such old time forums where children express themselves could be utilised and enhanced in order to promote open forums for children's expression of their views, needs and concerns.

Understanding of child participation and Obstacles to Meaningful Child

Participation among Children and Adults

One of the major objectives of this study was to identify the underlying causes, which inhibit children's right to meaningful participation in southern Sudan. As will be evident in this section, many of these root causes are related to ignorance, scepticism and negative attitudes toward children's abilities to participate, as well as cultural practices and traditions.

Issues of attitudes and understanding of child participation among children differs from the adult's point of view. Adults and more so parents are very keen in moulding and determining how children participate in family, schools and community issues.

As noted earlier, adults the world over have various beliefs about children participation and southern Sudan's case is no different. Interviews with teachers, parents and adult category of respondents revealed that though they value children's, the concept of meaningful participation is not clear. Majority of the adults do not bother to consider the opinions of children or even when children air their views, it is lowly regarded. Through this study, it was found out that some adults do not have much regard for children's opinion and perspectives because they do not belief children have anything substantive to contribute in the development of the country. In the words of some respondents, the southern Sudan set-up and the cultural belief that women and children are not allowed to talk in front of elders indicate the position of children when it comes to decision making.

"I wanted to talk to the Commissioner about the problem we are facing in school, but when I went to his office I was dismissed by the people who work in the office" 14 yrs old girl from, Godhim Primary School, Malualkon.

But on the contrary, many children indicated their quest to participate meaningfully; they want to influence decision making in the family, classroom/schools, community and the nation. "After you talk to us about what other children are doing in Africa and the world, now I understand what I didn't know before, I think we Sudanese children are really lagging behind" said a 15 year old boy from Cuibet Boys Primary school. "Why don't we do the same things other children are doing in other countries to the extent that people and government listens to us?" wondered another 16 year old boy from the same school. Through such statements, the study brought out the frustration facing children in their endeavour to participate in nation building and decision making processes.

From the data collected, it was also evident that majority of the participation that children were involved in at home, school and community level was at the discretion of the adults. At home, the parents were the main determinants of child participation while at school pupil's participation was at the discretion of the teachers.

I have told you that our country has just come from war, from my personal view, children and young people both in the past and even currently are there to be seen and not to be heard, the culture does not allow the elders and adults to involve children. Actually what role can children play in development issues? Aquila:

The challenge of children not being taken seriously

The majority of children who took part in this study said that they are ready to participate, but that parents and other adults are the major hindrance to allow this to happen. The discussions with adults and children clearly indicate that the prevailing attitude towards children is that adults know best and are able to act in the best interest of children. Consequently, among the major obstacles facing

children are that they are not listened to, taken seriously or respected as individuals who are capable to express their own views, opinions and suggestions.

A member of the Cuibet Child Rights Club noted that the teachers and the PTA members and even the community don't take them seriously. –He said that if they visit a community as members of the child rights clubs they are asked some funny questions like, what are our rights you have rights. A 14 years old girl who is a member of child rights club from Godhim Primary School, Maluakon shared her experience; *'I wanted to talk to the Commissioner about the problem we are facing in school, but when I went to his office I was dismissed by the people who work in the office.* From such experiences shared by the children, the study found out that the presumption that what adults, rather than children say and think is necessary and more sensible, relevant and appropriate is deeply rooted in the culture of many communities in southern Sudan.

And as if to prove their point, children shared what they have been able to do within the political arena. The girls and boys who participated in this study said that they want to participate in a serious and committed way, with a clear purpose; A 17 year old girl from Rumbek Girls Primary School, in Rumbek Central, Lakes State asserted; *'We participated in the liberation of our country, whether young or old. Now that we have freedom, they are telling us that we are too young to participate in the development of the Country'* Similar sentiments were echoed by a student at the Youth Education Centre in Maluakon. *He wondered; 'after singing and playing football, what next? We are still with the same problems we had. If I was asked, I would suggest we be allowed to participate in making our schools, our villages and our town centres better'.*

Traditions and cultural practices that discourage child involvement

Traditions and cultural practices were cited as other factors that discourage child involvement . Owing to the prevailing sets of beliefs, customs, practices, and social behavior of the Dinka community majority of the adult respondents viewed children as incapable of making sound decision or any meaningful contributions and that they lack the requisite knowledge and capacity to meaningfully contribute to adult discourse. The study found out that children's views lack seriousness as they are childish and lacking in substance. Many respondents indicated that children are considered as lacking the ability, competence and capacity for reasoning, and, hence, are not listened to or taken seriously in matters that affect them. In addition there are cultural practices that deny especially the girl child the opportunity to participate meaningfully in family and society matters due to lack of preparation. They include; cultural practices that are oppressive to children such as early and forced marriages among girls. Girls are booked and married off when they are very young. They become mothers when they are still children. This makes them to start groping with family life and therefore lacks the opportunity to participate in issues that concern them in society. Early and forced marriage was rated as one of the deeply rooted traditional practice that challenges girls' development in southern Sudan. Among the Dinka community, girls are seen as a source of wealth (in the form of cows). In many cases, girls are married off early in order that the family can obtain the cattle which could be used by the father to marry more wives or to pay the brother's dowry.

In addition children are hindered from participating effectively due to extraction of teeth and facial marking. The two practices are performed on young boys' early on in life and they do not have a say on whether they should or should not be taken through them. Face marking for instance is considered an initiation rite among boys and a tribal identification mark while as extraction of teeth was reported by boys as unnecessary and painful practices that they were forced to go through. The practice of extracting lower

teeth for both boys and girls hinder children's speech development and their eloquence which in turn affects their self esteem as they face challenges in public speaking. Children said that those who have their teeth removed unintentionally throws saliva to others while speaking. One of the respondents expressed his joy for not being taken through the rite. He said, 'you can see I am not marked on my face, am smart like other children and my teeth have not been removed, I am working and doing business here in Rumbek, I represent the new generation of young people in southern Sudan'.

Social construction of gender roles determines the kind of chores boys and girls carry out in any given community. In the Dinka community for instance, boys are sent to cattle camps where they have plenty to eat but miss on other opportunities such as in education since the cattle camps are far away from the communities. This at times seems to be a form of segregation which does not provide the *cattle camp boys* with opportunities to contribute meaningfully in family and community life. At the same time, too much domestic work especially among the girls and recruitment of children into armed forces, which affects boys more than girls, also amount to abuse of children's participation as children find themselves burdened with too much labour.

It was also noted that the pastoralist way of life, famine and insecurity are other cultural factors that hinder child participation. The fact that most of the communities are pastoralists who are on regular move in search of pasture and water, the conflict situation and frequent famines all combined takes toll on community priorities. It was perceived to be *very risky* or *unwise* to relegate the survival and security of the community to children thus inhibiting their participation in most spheres of life in their community.

Fear as another factor is partly a negative consequence of traditions and cultural practices. This is particularly true for the girl child. Girls were described as "shy" and indeed this was demonstrated in the study team's interviews where the participation of girls was very minimal. In addition the cultural practice that does not allow women to speak in front of men has significantly contributed to this situation.

Well, I think as I said, this community here is too tied up with a lot of cultural and traditional beliefs, therefore many children both boys and girls have no forums to express themselves- A commissioner in one of the counties in Lakes

Girls should talk to their mothers and boys talk to their fathers-A male respondent in Rumbek Central County

Conversely, it was reported that men are not allowed by culture to speak to girls. It was reported that girls speak to their mothers while boys talk to their fathers.

As reported in this study, among the Dinka community there is a cultural practice which encourages early marriages especially for the girl child. Girls are betrothed to would be

suitors at an early tender age and once the bride wealth is paid to the parents she is released to the husband. They are married off even while they are in primary school at very tender age. Early marriage among girls is a major threat to the participation of girls in education. The absence of many girls in schools may partly be as a result of early and forced marriages. Among the effects of this practice is that many women do not access education and hence are ill prepared to participate meaningfully in political matters. This is clearly reflected in the political arena at both local and national level where the presence and voice of girls and women is not forthcoming

Lack of Role Models

Children cited lack of role models as a hindrance to meaningful participation. More often than not, the military was cited as the reference points but *mostly based on the power of the gun* which is not on aspects that would pass for a role model. For school pupils, it was noted that there is lack of trained teachers and more so female teachers at all levels to serve as role models for the girl child. From the views of children, teachers and government officials, the fact that majority of the teachers handling the children have not been trained, they lack skills on child friendly methodologies which is a prerequisite to promote child participation within learning institutions.

All in all, the results of this study show that child participation takes place at the discretion of parents, teachers and other adults. However, many children were optimistic that with peace, and the establishment of the government, the future of their participation was bright.

CHAPTER 4: LESSONS LEARNT

This is the first study conducted by SCS in southern Sudan on child participation. The study was conducted in Lakes, Northern Bahr El Ghazal and Jonglei states which comprised SCS operation area. The study was bold and ambitious steps that hopefully will provide SCS and other interested actors with indepth information to enhance meaningful child participation in various sectors and levels in southern Sudan.

Gender issues are significant determinants of participation

In many contexts, there may be more organised opportunities for boys to participate than girls, which may reflect both cultural attitudes towards gender, and the fact that girls often have a greater burden of work placed upon them in the home and community set up. It is not uncommon to find activities designed mainly around the needs of boys, especially in schools where they may be more visible - and perhaps perceived as being more potentially troublesome - than girls. Particular care may need to be taken to ensure that girls become actively engaged, and to ensure that boys do not dominate participation in decision-making. It was noted that many girls were involved in songs and dances. This was a common phenomenon in all locations visited. It was evident that girls and women have very few chances to speak and even participate in public forums but through music and dance. The cultural attitudes and the social construction of the many communities in southern Sudan hinders women and girls from participation and involvement in key decision-making process at the household level, community and even at the national level.

Children's commitment to participation

Children are committed and ready to be assisted to join other children in the world in advocating for their rights and recognition of their views, feelings and aspirations. The children are ready and willing to re-start a process of meaningful participation amongst peers and within the family, school, community and national levels.

Differences in the perception of children participation

The study provides important information to guide the government, others agencies and different categories of duty bearers on the different perceptions of child participation which calls for goodwill from every one in order to promote meaningful children's participation.

Importance of support for child participation by relevant stakeholders

The commitment and support from the Government, local Authorities, INGOs and UN agencies to support child participation in southern Sudan are critical ingredients to ensure that all actors take relevant actions. This will facilitate meaningful participation of the girls and boys.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the findings and analysis of the views expressed by the children, parents, teachers, government officers, religious leaders, members of the communities and other professionals working in Lakes, Jonglei and Northern Bahr El Ghazal states in southern Sudan

1. Legislative and legal measures

The Constitution of southern Sudan provides equal constitutional rights to all people including the children. Through the child bill, the legal framework has incorporated the right of children to participate in decision making process; children's voices have been enshrined in the constitution. This is a major paradigm shift towards the cause of children's rights in southern Sudan. All actors in children issues should advocate for the legal enactment to facilitate children's participation and protection from any forms of abuse.

2. Government protection from harmful traditional beliefs and practices

The children indicated the need for Government protection from harmful traditional beliefs and practices. There is need for stakeholders to deliberate on how to protect children from being subjected to these practices and for the government to provide for legal protection for children against them.

The Child Bill is a legal framework that has captured the rights of children. Once enacted, the bill will provide some direction and the necessary measures to address the issues that have been identified as the major challenge facing child participation in southern Sudan. For instance, the children bill will provide a legal framework on how to deal with traditions, cultures and beliefs that hinder realisation of children's right in southern Sudan. This is a fundamental measure to ensure meaningful participation of children. Once enacted, the Child Bill should be simplified and distributed to children and other parties with an interest in children's issues.

3. Lobbying the government at state and national levels

SCS has a wealth of experience on child rights and children's participation in southern Sudan. The organization should therefore work very closely with the GoSS and relevant line ministries to promote child rights. SCS should engage the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education officials on relevant matters pertaining to this child rights such as assessment on how children are involved in schools and communities, assessment of line ministry training needs, selection of participants for training and on monitoring and evaluation of the training. Moreover, the program should support the MoEST's goal of promoting extra curricular activities – such as art, culture, drama, traditional dance, sport, girl guide and scouting movements and music in schools in the three states. The program should further work with the relevant line ministries policy makers and teacher trainees so as to promote child friendly policies and methodologies respectively. The program need also to support exchange visits as a way of engaging the government at different levels to recognize and develop policies on extra curriculum activities- cultural, sports and play in schools and communities.

4. Campaign targeting parents and teachers

Socialisation right from the family, school and community, contributes significantly to the social status of children and their ability to participate in community matters. In order to influence a change of attitude for the primary social groups that shape the children's mind with regard to participation, there will be need to mount awareness campaigns with parents, teachers and the general community about child participation.

5. Awareness creation

In various operational areas where Save the Children operates a lot of activities and projects are always undertaken by various programmes to promote children's rights. However, lack of relevant information and application of knowledge on child rights is still a major drawback towards child protection and participation. There is need to create awareness on child rights among children, parents, teachers, government officials and local leaders and link the knowledge to life situations in the community. The need to provide capacity building on child rights is key to ensure the voices of children is realised.

6. Establishment and support of child right clubs

Child Rights Clubs should be established and strengthened (in Save the Children operational areas) and capacity given to teachers, PTAs, Community Support Groups and children themselves. Teachers should be supported to acquire more capacity on child rights and child friendly methodologies so as to enhance their skills and knowledge which are a prerequisite for meaningful participation of all girls and boys.

7. Development and distribution of child right advocacy materials

In order to create awareness to a cross section of the community in child rights and child participation in particular, the program should utilize Information, Education and Communication materials such as posters, booklets, stickers, T-Shirts, caps, art, painting or drawing competitions with child right advocacy messages to campaign for children's participation.

8. Children's right days, events and forums

Save the Children Sweden should organise or support special children's rights forums among the children from various operational areas in southern Sudan, where the children will participate in exchanging experiences & learning between representatives of Child rights clubs and other groups, understanding the issues affecting the child's right to be heard in matters concerning their lives in southern Sudan, explore different ways children have influenced people in power, understand children's experiences on how to successfully involve them in decision-making structures affecting children's lives and also to capture learning that would help SCS increase its child participation work. Other proposals include organizing essay competitions, songs, dances on child rights e.g. to mark the Day of the African Child June 16th June, Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) Anniversary Day 9th January, Universal Children's Day 20th November, International Children's Day of Broadcasting second Sunday of December, among others. Such activities will motivate and encourage the child rights clubs members and create awareness on child rights through different forums. In addition the program can explore modalities of utilizing already existing traditional forums such as the traditional courts, or evening dance and drama, to pass these messages of child participation.

9. Enhance Involvement of children in SCS work

This study recommends the need to identify some children who will be informed about the objectives of SCS in southern Sudan, who can speak as part of beneficiaries of the projects, especially children from the child rights clubs. This will give the ownership of the project to the children and community. The children from the various clubs in the areas of operation can form the junior advisors and participate in the state or annual review meetings. The junior advisors capacity in public speaking should be enhanced in order for them to effectively represent children interests who constitute the major beneficiaries of Save the Children Sweden interventions. The organization should also consult the children through these representatives during project planning and implementation. They should also be utilised to children's issues in states functions and international events.

10. Taping children's talents

During our visits to various centres, we discovered great talents and gift many children have, among them singing, sports, and acting. This study recommends projects and activities that will promote the talents as a component of expression and public awareness on child rights led by children themselves in southern Sudan. Other relevant activities could include children's talent shows, recording of children's songs, production of a special radio and TV documentaries to promote children's voices, public forums on child rights, public processions, exchange visits and sports competitions within payams, counties, state and inter states and girl child rights campaign by girls themselves supported by women leaders and other.

11. Establishment of a national children's ambassador

In order to ensure children's issues are constantly put on the limelight, the government should consider the appointment of a national figure to speak and defend the voices of children in southern Sudan. Such personality should have national influence and should strive to meet government officials on behalf of children and meet with children on various occasions both at the national and International level. This will assist to change negative perception about children. The eligibility criteria should include such aspects as their interest in children issues and their ability to articulate those issues at different high level forums. The children made suggestion of such an ambassador who included such names as the First Lady, John Kudussay a musician, and Mrs. Rebecca Garang, wife of the 1st president.

12. Community based approach

The parents, teachers, traditional and local leaders have massive social influence to the moral, character and beliefs about children. Government legal interventions alone may fail to change the deep rooted beliefs and traditions that are oppressive to children hence organizations should be encouraged to utilise existing Community based approaches and structures as a means to support children's rights in southern Sudan.

The support of the community structures such as Community Support Groups, Parents Teachers Association, support of local leadership system, chiefs, community elders, Religious leader will improve the realisation of the rights of all children. SCS should continue to tap and strengthen the existing structures and avenues for children's participation. The traditional forums where children had the opportunity to express themselves could be utilized and enhanced in order to promote open forums for children expression of their views, needs and concerns.

13. Dissemination of Study report

Once the report is finalised, it will provide Save the Children Sweden with a platform to advocate for the southern Sudan children in various arenas, in southern Sudan and beyond. We recommend children to be involved in discussing the report and give feedback to check if it captures their aspirations, views and opinions. The report should further be disseminated to the government and all other child rights agencies, UN agencies and International organisations, local and International media in southern Sudan to increase visibility of the invisible voices of children in southern Sudan.

The study recommends the need to produce a simplified version report for children with pictures, cartoons, and colours in a child-friendly format, the children should be involved in the production process and given opportunity to draw and paint the pictures.

14. Challenging existing negative perceptions about children

There exists a deep rooted presumption that what adults, rather than children say and think is necessary and more sensible, relevant and appropriate in most communities in southern Sudan. If children's active involvement in decisions that affect their lives is to be respected, it is necessary challenge that presumption through awareness, training and showcasing of practical cases.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The main objective of the study was to identify opportunities and challenges that hinder child participation. There are many examples and opportunities for children's participation in southern Sudan. Majority of the children thought that adults should guide them on how to participate in decision-making process. However, adults' attitudes and perceptions about children present the main hindrance towards meaningful participation of children. In addition, the study reveals a conflicting situation between children and adults since interpretation of the concept of child participation is different between the children's and adults' point of view.

Teachers and parents were identified as very critical persons in moulding and determining how children will participate in family, schools and communities issues. Many children indicated the need to participate meaningfully in family and national issues; children want to have influence beyond family, class, schools, community and the nation.

The fear of starting a new process for child participation based on what children really want will pose as the main challenge for development organisations working with children. The study notes that there is dire need for commitment from adults to support children realise their talents and expand their participation but also realises that this will pose a major challenge to the status quo. Children's organisations should therefore braise themselves to challenge the status quo if children's participation is to gain root in southern Sudan.

Annexes

Terms of Reference

Background to the Study

Participation is a key principle of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) alongside the *best interest of the child* (CRC Art. 3), *survival and development and non-discrimination*²¹. The aim of SCS is to continue promoting children and young people's participation with the rights-based approach.

Participation is a fundamental right of citizenship. In most regions of the world, adult citizens have all opportunities to participate in community life. They have organizations, forums and gatherings to present their views. Children and youth on the other hand are not given the same opportunities. When they do, it is generally dependent on the good will of adults.

Within the context of children and youth participation, Southern Sudan community is one of the many dominated by adults. Children and youths' voice and decision making abilities are yet to be realised at the family, school and community levels. The long civil war has also hampered the growth of initiatives that promote the participation of girls and boys. A major effect of the conflict is that positive traditional practices and values that amplify protection and development of children have been disrupted. However, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in 2005 ushered a new era for the people of Southern Sudan. With peace, SCS perceives rekindled and new opportunities (and also challenges) in relation to how to engage girls and boys in the reconstruction of their nation by making their voices heard.

Upon a rather gloomy environment for Sudanese boys and girls in the last two decades, SCS has continued to advocate for the rights of all children in Southern Sudan for a long term (time) leading to a wealth of experience on the subject. SCS would want to take opportunity of the new socio political and economic dispensation to determine the underlying causes hamper the specific needs, potentials, abilities of the children and their voices to be heard, as well as identifying the opportunities for children's participation.

Purpose of the study

The aims of the study are to;

1. determine the gaps and opportunities for practical participation of girls and boys in Southern Sudan in all matters that affect them
2. identify the underlying (root) causes hindering meaningful children's participation
3. establish some of the positive aspects and forums for participation already existing within the communities
4. come up with salient recommendations on how to address the gaps and optimize on the opportunities as a way to step up the realisation of children's rights

²¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child

Who will be involved in the study?

To realize the study objectives, our focus is mainly on children both in and out of school, children in clubs, parents and family members, community in general, local authorities, other agencies, relevant department/ministry officials and other government officers

The study will be conducted with the assistance of an external consultant, Timothy Gitau. The consultant is expected to be a flexible person who will team up with the Program Officer Child Participation and other staff of Save the Children Sweden as agreed from time to time (location to location) during the planning, development of the methodology and instruments for data collection, actual field work and documentation as a means of ensuring the successful undertaking of the study.

The specific areas of focus and steps in the study will include (but not limited) to;

1. Identifying existing perceptions of children and specifically focus on girls and boys
2. Find out whether existing perceptions about boys and girls are inclusive
3. Identify any existing challenges/barriers in the involvement of the marginalized groups of children e.g. the girl child, children with disabilities etc in comparison to the involvement of other children
4. Determine whether the concept of child participation exists in schools, families, society in general or not
5. Identify and isolate the perception and attitudes of adults towards children's participation as a prerequisite in realization of children's rights
6. Establish and isolate any existing traditions and practices found in the community that encourage or discourage involvement of girls and boys
7. Identify the forms and nature of children's involvement in schools, family and communities
8. Find out the views of children regarding their participation in the family, school and community levels
9. Determine and isolate any benefits linked to involvement of children from the children and adult's point of view in different contexts
10. Establish and isolate the challenges faced by children and adults when involving children at family, school and community
11. Identify the general respondents' perception of the causes of children's non participation
12. Identify how relevant government officials/departments and actors perceive, work and support children's participation in their operations.
13. Document the process, experiences, lessons learnt and responses received from the study

14. Come up with practical recommendations based on the views of the community, government officials, children, parents and other relevant agencies as to what should be done to help children become partners in decision making
15. Share the outcome of the study with selected staff within SCS program

How to Use the Study Outcome

1. Enhance awareness of children rights among children, families, community and government in southern Sudan and beyond
2. Use information to influence GOSS policy on children's rights
3. Provide contextual knowledge for actors with regard to children's participation
4. Raise the profile and perception of girls and boys right to be heard
5. Encourage more respect to boys and girls perspectives
6. Contribute data to the upcoming CRC report for Sudan in 2007
7. Use study as basis for SCS future plans and direction as regards children's right to be heard

In addition, it is expected that SCS staff involved in the study will enhance their knowledge on child participation and skills to carry out research.

Methods of Data Collection:

The study will combine a range of methods to ensure quality data in both the process and collection of information. The methods and instruments of data collection will depend on the target respondents who include the community members, parents and teachers, children, relevant government officers, local authorities and other agencies working with children. The key methods will comprise target specific questionnaires, interviews, focused group discussions, consultations, mini workshops, literature review and general observations. The importance of involving the children in the study also necessitates the application of child friendly methodologies. The research team will be required to be innovative and proactive to match the challenges that may emerge during the study.

Time frame

The study will be spread over a 1½ month period between November- December 2006.

The Study Geographical coverage

The study was conducted in SC-S the Lakes, Jonglei and Northern Bahr El Ghazal States, in Southern Sudan. Table 1 below indicates the date, state and number of participants involved in the data collection activity.

Table 1 date, state and number of participants directly involved in the data collection activity.

Date	State	County	School	No.	Age
13/11/06	Lakes State	Rumbek	Rumbek Girls Primary School	4	Above 18 yrs
15/11/06			Ager Gum Primary School	10	Below 18yrs
14/11/06			Sunrise Academy	40	4 -12 yrs
14/11/06			Golmeen Pre School	20	5-12 yrs
			Community Support Group	12	Above 18 yrs
14/11/06			PTA Group	12	Above 18 yrs
08/11/06		Cuibet	Cuibet Girls Primary School	12	12-18 yrs
07/11/06			Cuibet Boys Primary School	12	12-18 yrs
11/11/06			Community Support Group	12	Above 18 yrs
22/11/06	Northern Bahr El Ghazal	Aweil East	Maluakon Primary School	20	12-18 yrs
22/11/06			Gordim Primary School	10	12-18 yrs
21/11/06			Gordim Pre-School	20	5-12 yrs
22/11/06			Youth Educational Centre, Maluakon	20	15-30 yrs
24/11/06			Akwem- Community Support Group	12	Above 18 yrs
27/11/06	Jonglei	Twic East	Panyagor Primary School	20	12-18 yrs
28/11/06			Kongor Youth Educational Centre	20	15-30 yrs
29/11/06			Paliau Primary School (Teachers)	10	Above 18 yrs
29/11/06			Marial Primary School (Teachers)	10	Above 18 yrs
30/11/06			Community Support Group/ PTA	12	Above 18 yrs
4/12/ 06	Lakes	Rumbek Central	Annual General Meeting Staff S-CS Sudan Program	37	Above 18 yrs

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Data collection tools

Survey Questionnaire for children and young people

Purpose of the study

SCS Southern Sudan program has been promoting children's participation throughout its program. The proposed activity aims to further understand how children/youth in Jonglei, Lakes and Northern Bahr El Ghazal states are involved in various community affairs. The study will seek to **determine the existence, nature/form, and ways of involvement with the aim of enhancing opportunities and capacity of children to organize and express themselves.** The outcome of the study will be important to inform our future work and that of other actors so as to realize meaningful participation of children/youth in matters that affect them.

Informed Consent form for all adults

Greetings,

I am, from SCS. I wish to learn from you and your peers about how as young people you are involved in different issues and activities in the family, school and community in general. You can use any form of communication- talking, singing, writing, drawing, story telling, role play etc to explain yourself. Together we can decide when to do this, today or some other time or place. You have the right to decide who to be with you and even whether to talk to me or not. You can do this in any way that makes you feel comfortable – alone/with a friend/or as a group. You will suffer no harm by not talking to me but by talking to me, you will give your time and experiences. What you share with me will help our organization work better with children and the community. In case you do not talk to me, our organization will still work with your community and children in particular. All that you share will remain confidential as we will not show who said what. If you have decided to talk to me, please tell me.

Consent granted

Consent declined

Date

Facilitator/Interviewer's signature

Part II Interviewer's profile:

1. Date of interview:
2. Interviewer's name:
3. Position:
4. Venue of interview e.g. home, roadside, school, water point, play ground, etc.

Specify

Please help the respondent to answer all questions that are relevant to them. Remember to observe filter questions. Use a tick to mark the boxes. Write down the words exactly as spoken by the respondents (verbatim) especially for the open ended questions

Part III Respondent's profile

- a. Names (optional).....
- b. Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐
- c. Age (optional) you can use age ranges (e.g. 3-6, 7-10)
- d. Where is your home: Village/boma..... Payam..... County..... and state

1. With whom do you live in your home?

Person/s living with respondent	What they do (focus on source of livelihood)
My mother	
My father	
My sisters	
My brothers	
My uncle	
My aunt	
Other relatives-specify-	
Others- specify-	

2. Do you have other siblings? How many brothers and sisters

3. Do you know children and young people have rights: yes/no. if yes, explain what a right is.

4. What do you consider to be your rights?

5. Who should provide for your rights?

6. How can you benefit from your rights?

7. Do your parents and community agree that young people too have rights? Yes/No. Describe what they say about children's rights.

8. Do you attend school? If yes. List the following information:

Name of school.....

Level/class/grade

If not going to school, why?.....

6. Do your siblings go to school? If yes or no, explain by filling in the table below

R#	Age	Sex	Why not in school	Activities involved in
1.				

8. Do you have a say in what happens in school? Yes/No. If yes give examples. If not why?

9. How do you express yourself best e.g. by talking, music, song/dance or drama specify

10. How would you want to see your school become a better place of learning?

11. Do you have a say in what happens at home? Yes or No. If yes give examples. If not why?

12. Do you have a say in what happens in the community? Yes or No. If yes give examples. If not why?

13. Do you have a say in what happens with the authorities? Yes or No. If yes give examples. If not why?

14. How did you feel for getting the chance to make a decision in school, home or community? Give examples.

15. How do teachers in schools teach or give their instructions to children in the classroom?

Teacher's Action	Frequently	Rarely	Don't do it
Uses teaching aid			
Agrees, understands, listens to pupils			
Receives suggestions from pupils			
Asks for information and feelings of pupils			

Asks for suggestion and direction, possible plan of action from children			
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16. What are the common culturally appropriate ways for young people to talk about their concerns, ideas and questions that they have in school, family, community to national level?
17. What could be done to enhance realisation of your right to participation in school, family, community to national level

Thank you very much for sharing with us.

Survey Questionnaire for Adults-parents, family and community members

Purpose of the Study

SCS Southern Sudan program has been promoting children's participation throughout its program. The proposed activity aims to further explore how children are involved in the communities in Jonglei, Lakes and Northern Bahr El Ghazal state. The study will seek to **determine the existence, nature or forms of participation, good practices and barriers to participation with the aim of enhancing and capacity of adults and opportunities for children to express themselves.** The outcome of the study will be important to inform our future work and that of other actors so as to realize meaningful participation of children/youth in matters that affect them.

Informed Consent form for all adults

Greetings,

I am, from SCS. I wish to learn from you and your community about how children are involved in different issues and activities in this community. You can do this in any way that makes you feel comfortable – alone/with a friend/or as a group. Together we can decide how to do this. You have the right to decide who to be with you and even whether to talk to me or not. You will suffer no harm by not talking to me but by talking to me, you will give your time and experiences. What you share with me will help our organization work better with children and the community. In case you do not talk to me our organization will still work with the children and community. All that you share will remain confidential as we will not show who said what. If you have decided to talk to me, please tell me.

Consent granted

Consent declined

Date of interview:

Interviewer's/Facilitator's profile:

2. Interviewer's/Facilitator's name:

3. Position in SCS:

4. Place of interview: (if homestead indicate so)

Village/boma

Payam

County

State

Interviewee's profile

1. Names (optional).....

2. Sex:

3. Age (optional)

Please help the respondent to answer all questions that are relevant to them. Remember to observe filter questions. Use a tick to mark the boxes. Write down the words exactly as spoken by the respondents (verbatim) especially for the open ended questions

1. Explain what you think about children in general?
2. What are your views regarding the girl child?
3. How does your community view children with disability? (specify when the point refers to either boy or girl)

4. What are the common roles and responsibilities of the girl and boy child in the family until one is an adult?

Approximate age	Roles and responsibilities of a girl	Roles and responsibilities of a boy

5. Explain what affects how girls communicate with adults in the community
6. Explain what affects how boys communicate with adults in the community

7. What are the existing forums and activities that encourage girls and boys to express their views when they want to express or give their opinions to the adults?

Approximate age	Activities and forums that encourage girls	Activities and forums that encourage boys

8. What are the existing factors that hinder girls and boys from playing an active role in society or share their opinions and views with adults?

Approximate age	Factors that hinder girls from playing an active role in society	Factors that hinder boys from playing an active role in society

9. Explain what you think are the benefits of involving children/youth in issues that affect them in the family/community
10. How can girls and boys be encouraged to take an active role in matters that affect them in the family/community in general?

Thank you for taking your time and sharing with us!

Survey Questionnaire for other Agencies working on Children's Rights issues

Purpose of the Study

SCS Southern Sudan program has been promoting children's participation throughout its program. The proposed activity aims to further explore how children are involved at different levels in Jonglei, Lakes and Northern Bahr El Ghazal states. The study will seek to **determine the existence, nature or forms of participation, good practices and barriers to participation with the aim of enhancing and capacity of adults and opportunities for children to express themselves.** The outcome of the study will be important to inform our future work, that of the government as the primary duty bearer and other actors so as to realize meaningful participation of children/youth in matters that affect them.

Informed Consent form for all adults

Greetings,

I am, from SCS. I wish to learn from you about how children/youth are involved in different issues and activities in your agency. You can do this in any way that makes you feel comfortable – alone/with a friend/or as a group. Together we can decide how to do this. You have the right to decide who to be with you and even whether to talk to me or not. You will suffer no harm by not talking to me but by talking to me, you will give your time and experiences. What you share with me will help our organization work better with children and the community. In case you do not talk to me, our organization will still collaborate with your agency on children's issues in the community. All that you share will remain confidential as we will not show who said what. If you have decided to talk to me, please tell me.

Consent granted

Consent declined

Date of interview:

Interviewer's/Facilitator's profile:

5. Interviewer's/Facilitator's name:
6. Position in SCS:
7. Place of interview:
Village/boma Payam.....
County..... State

Interviewee's profile

4. Names (optional).....
5. Sex: Boy Girl
6. Position/Title:
7. Name of Agency:
8. Agency's areas operation

1. How does your organization work with children/youth?

Direct direct and indirect indirect

2. Depending with the level you have selected above, how do you work with the children/youth? Please explain:

3. What is your basic understanding of children's right to participation in the Southern Sudan context?

4. Do you think that children/youth are included in the community agendas when discussing matters of development in the community in general? If yes/no explain
5. What are some of the practices in the community that your organization has identified that hinders children/youth from participating in various community activities?
6. What are the most common challenges you encounter (If at all) as you go about your work in the community in regard to young peoples' participation?
7. What are some of the strategies that your organization thinks should be put in place to support children and young people to meaningfully participate in community affairs?
8. What strategies has your organization put in place to support children and young people to meaningfully participate in community affairs in relation to your work?
9. Do you have tools or resource material to support children and young people's participation in Southern Sudan? If yes, list them. If yes, give more information.
10. How would your organization want to collaborate with SCS and other actors in the promotion of meaningful and ethical practice in Southern Sudan?
11. What lessons have you learnt regarding involving children/young people in your work?
11. Any other comment on realization of children's right to participation?

Thank you for accepting to share with us

Survey Questionnaire for children club members

Purpose of the study

SCS Southern Sudan program has been promoting children's participation throughout its program. The proposed activity aims to further understand how children's clubs and groups in schools in Jonglei, Lakes and Northern Bahr El Ghazal states operate. The study will seek to **determine the existence, nature/form, and ways of operation of the children clubs/groups with the aim of enhancing opportunities and capacity of children to organize and express themselves.** The outcome of the study will be important to inform our future work and that of other actors so as to realize meaningful participation of children/youth in matters that affect them.

Informed consent form for all children/club members and groups

Greetings,

I am, from SCS. I wish to learn from you and your club mates about your daily activities. You can talk, sing, write, act or draw to explain your point. Together we can decide when to do this, today or some other time. You and your age mates can do this in any way that makes you feel comfortable – alone/with a friend/or as a group. You have the right to decide who to be with you and even whether to talk to me or not. You will suffer no harm by not talking to me but by talking to me, you will give your time and experiences. What you share with me will help our organization work better with children and community and even if you do not talk to me our organization will still work with the children and community. If you want anything that you share with me to remain confidential, I will respect your view by not showing who said what. If you have decided to talk to me, please tell me.

Consent granted

Consent declined

Date of interview:

Interviewer's/Facilitator's profile:

8. Interviewer's/Facilitator's name:

9. Position in SCS:

10. Place of interview: (if school, indicate name)

Village/boma

Payam

County

State

Interviewee's profile

9. Names (optional).....

10. Sex: Girl ☐ Boy ☐

11. Age (optional).....

12. School: Class: ...

Field guide questions for children club members

1. How are children organized in this school to be able to express themselves?
2. How did the club begin?
3. What are the objectives of the club?
4. How is the club organized?
5. How many members are there in your club? Girl ... and boys ...

6. Explain how girls and boys participate in club activities? Do girls and boys have equal opportunities?
7. What is the age range/bracket of the club members? ***Tick appropriately.*** Below 6 years...6-9 years..... 10-13 years 14- 18 years... Above 18 years.....
8. How were the members recruited?
9. How often do the club members meet?
10. What do you do when you meet?
11. What (time) does the club meet or carry out its activities?
12. Where (place) does the club meet or carry out its activities?
13. How does the club come up with activities?
14. Who decides on what activities to be done?
15. Explain how your club undertakes its activities
16. Explain who else supports your club activities and in what ways e.g. teachers, parents, leaders
17. Explain what type of records the club keeps e.g. registration forms for membership, attendance, minutes etc
18. Explain what you like about your club?
19. Explain what you don't like about your club?
20. Explain what benefits you have seen since joining the club?
21. Explain the challenges you face as a club.
22. Explain how you would want to see your club improve?
23. How have you tried to make this change happen?
24. What future plans does your club have?
25. Do you have any other comments?

Thank you for taking your time and sharing with us!

Survey Questionnaire for Local Authorities and Relevant Government Officers

Purpose of the Study

SCS Southern Sudan program has been promoting children's participation throughout its program. The proposed activity aims to further explore how children are involved at different levels in Jonglei, Lakes and Northern Bahr El Ghazal states. The study will seek to **determine the existence, nature or forms of participation, good practices and barriers to participation with the aim of enhancing and capacity of adults and opportunities for children to express themselves.** The outcome of the study will be important to inform our future work, that of the government as the primary duty bearer and other actors so as to realize meaningful participation of children/youth in matters that affect them.

Informed Consent form for all adults

Greetings,

I am, from SCS. I wish to learn from you as a representative of the community/government/ministry about how children/youth are involved in different issues and activities in your area. You can do this in any way that makes you feel comfortable – alone/with a friend/or as a group. Together we can decide how to do this. You have the right to decide who to be with you and even whether to talk to me or not. You will suffer no harm by not talking to me but by talking to me, you will give your time and experiences. What you share with me will help our organization work better with children and the community. In case you do not talk to me, our organization will still work with the children and community in the area. All that you share will remain confidential as we will not show who said what. If you have decided to talk to me, please tell me.

Consent granted

Consent declined

Date of interview:

Interviewer's/Facilitator's profile:

11. Interviewer's/Facilitator's name:

12. Position in SCS:

13. Place of interview: (if homestead

indicate so)

Village/boma

Payam.....

County..... State

.....

Interviewee's profile

13. Names (optional).....

14. Sex: Boy ☐ Girl ☐

15. Position/Title:

11. What are your views regarding children?

12. What are your views regarding the girl child?

13. What are the common views in the community regarding children with disability? (specify when the point refers to either boy or girl)

14. What are the existing ways that encourage girls and boys to express their views in your area?

Ways/practices that encourage girls	Ways/practices that encourage boys

15. What are the practices (traditional or others) that do not encourage girls and boys to express themselves in community matters?

What hinders girls' active involvement	What hinders boys' active involvement

16. Do you think that children are included in the community agendas when discussing community development in general? If yes/no explain

17. Southern Sudan is now at peace. Are there emerging opportunities for boys or girls to active take part in different matters of importance to them in the community? If yes, list them below

New opportunities for active involvement of girls	New opportunities for active involvement of boys

9. What do you see as the main challenges (If at all) in regard to young peoples' participation?

10. What are some of the things you feel should be done to support children and young people to meaningfully take an active role in matters that affect them in the community?

11. Do you have any other comments concerning involvement of children/youth?

Thank you for accepting to share with us

Tentative Child Participation study Time line November – December 2006

Date	Morning/ Afternoon	Location	Activity	Activity details	Core persons	Other SCS staff /Optional
1 st Nov	Wed - Morning	Traveling day Nrb – Rumbek			Tim Sammy	
	Wed- Afternoon	Rumbek	Meeting with FM	Debriefing	Akot, Sammy Tim	Invite other SCS staff RK Govedi Beatrice Chabari
		Rumbek	Meeting with Akot	Induction	Tim Sammy	CM RK or FO

2 nd Nov	Thur-Morning	Rumbek	Pilot study	parents and children in the community around SCS compound	Tim Sammy Akot	Optional: CM FO-Benjamin Majok
	Thur-Afternoon	Rumbek	Post pilot analysis	Feedback and review		FO CM
3 rd Nov	Fri-Morning	Rumbek	Meeting with CM	Briefing & sharing expectations-planning	Sammy Tim Akot	FM APO FO CMs
	Fri-Afternoon	Rumbek	Pilot study	Open discussions with SCS support staff	Sammy Tim Akot	Open to other Staff
4 th Nov	Sat-Morning	Rumbek	Pilot study	Parents & children	Sammy Tim Akot	
	Sat-Afternoon	Rumbek	Debriefing	Feedback and review		
5 th Nov	Sun-Morning	Preparations to travel to Cuibet			Sammy Tim Akot	
	Afternoon	Consultant, Akot and Sammy travel to Cuibet				
6 th Nov	Mon-Morning	Cuibet	Meeting with SCS staff	Briefing & sharing expectations-planning	Sammy Tim Akot	All CMs and PC
	Afternoon	Cuibet	SCS support staff forum	Open discussions with SCS support staff	Sammy Tim Akot	Optional: CMs
7 th Nov	Tuesday	Cuibet	Teachers	Cuibet girls and Cuibet boys pry school	Sammy Tim Akot	PC optional CMs
8 th Nov	Wednesday	Cuibet	Meeting with children club members Children out of school	Cuibet girls and Cuibet boys pry school	Tim Akot	Optional :PC & CMs
	Wed-Afternoon	Cuibet	Other Agencies	To be identified during the planning	Tim Akot	Important for PC to be there
9 th Nov	Thursday	Cuibet	Relevant Government and local leaders	To be identified during the planning	Tim Akot	Important for PC to be there
10 th Nov	Friday		1 PTA	To be identified during the planning	Tim Akot	CMs
11 th Nov	Saturday		1 CSG	To be identified during the planning	Tim Akot	CMs

12th Nov	Sunday	Akot and consultant travel back to Rumbek				
13th Nov	Monday	Rumbek	Teachers	Ager Gum & Rumbek Girls Pry school	Tim Akot	FO or CMs
14th Nov	Tuesday	Rumbek	Meeting with children club members Children out of school	Ager Gum & Rumbek Girls Pry school clubs	Tim Akot	FO & CMs
15th Nov	Wednesday	Rumbek	Selected relevant Agencies	May include Unicef, MOEST	Tim Akot	Important for FM to be there
16th Nov	Thursday	Rumbek	Relevant Government and local leaders	To be identified during the planning	Tim Akot	Important for FM to be there
17th Nov	Friday	Rumbek	1 PTA	To be identified during the planning	Tim Akot	Important for PC to be there
18th Nov	Saturday	Rumbek	1 CSG	To be identified during the planning	Tim Akot	CMs
19th Nov	Sunday	Rumbek				
20th Nov	Monday-Morning		Tim and Akot travel to Maluaklon			
	Monday-Afternoon		Meeting with SCS staff	Briefing & sharing expectations-planning	Tim Akot	FM, YEC, PC and CMs available
21st Nov	Tuesday		Teachers	One school to be identified	Tim Akot	PC and CMs
22nd Nov	Wednesday		Meeting with children/Youth club members	1 child right club YEC	Tim Akot	CMs YE trainees or YEC
23rd Nov	Thursday		Select relevant Agencies	May include SCS-UK, AMUT, IRC, MOEST	Tim Akot	Important for FM or PC to be there
24th Nov	Friday		1 PTA	To be identified	Tim Akot	Important for PC to be there
25th Nov	Saturday-Morning		1 CSG	To be identified	Tim Akot	CMs
	Sat-Afternoon		SCS support staff forum	Open discussions with SCS support staff	Tim Akot	CMs
26th	Sunday					

Nov						
27 th Nov	Monday		Akot and Tim travel back to Rumbek			
28 th Nov	Tuesday		Team fills in any gaps in Rumbek and prepare to travel to Mabior			
29 th Nov	Wednesday		Tim and Akot travels to Mabior			
30 th Nov	Thursday-Morning		Meeting with SCS staff	Briefing & sharing expectations-planning	Tim Akot	FM, YEC, APO and CMs available
1 st Dec	Friday		1 PTA	To be identified	Tim Akot	Important for PC to be there
2 nd Dec	Saturday		1 CSG	To be identified	Tim Akot	CMs
3 rd Dec	Sunday					
4 th Dec	Monday		Teachers	One school to be identified	Tim Akot	APO, FO and CMs
5 th Dec	Tuesday		Meeting with children members	1 child right club	Tim Akot	CMs
6 th Dec	Wednesday		Youths	YEC	Tim Akot	YE trainees or YEC
7 th Dec	Thursday		Select relevant Agencies		Tim Akot	Important for FM
8 th Dec	Friday		SCS support staff forum	Open discussions with SCS support staff	Tim Akot	CMs
9 th Dec	Saturday		1 CSG	To be identified	Tim Akot	CMs
10 th Dec	Sunday					
11 th Dec	Monday		Akot returns to duty station and Tim to Nairobi			
12 th - 19 th Dec		Consultants works on the 1 st draft				
20 th Dec		1 st Draft Submitted				

Note: The plan is very ambitious but at the same time quite flexible. However it provides the desired targets and can therefore be used as one of the criteria for monitoring the stud. The plan is also a way of sharing our expectations of other staff and will go along way in enabling targeted respondents to be contacted in good time.